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Book Review

Jan Sobocan
The University of Western Ontario, jsobocan@uwo.ca

Wilde, S. (Ed.). (2005). *Political and citizenship education: International perspectives.* Oxford, UK: Symposium Books. ISBN: 1873927 991. Pages: 144. Reviewed by Jan Sobocan (The University of Western Ontario).

In the first section of this volume, authors outline the respective national challenges for civic educators in the U.S., England, Australia, and Hong Kong. Their conclusions are based on the results of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement Study (otherwise called the "IEP" or "CivEd" Study). In the second part of the volume, authors who have conducted qualitative research offer conclusions intended to help educators improve the quality of citizenship education in Europe and Germany. The cross-section of results and interpretations presented on the status of citizenship education are both disparaging and illuminating.

Part I: Interpretations of quantitative studies into citizenship knowledge and attitudes

In Chapter One, Hahn outlines the national and comparative status of early teen readiness for citizenship. She reports that: "…at age 14 most students in the United States have a good general understanding of democracy and democratic principles, and they report a number of attitudes and behaviours that point toward their becoming civically engaged, tolerant citizens" (p.17). Hahn emphasizes that this knowledge is basic and insufficient insofar as it could lead to engagement in political processes such as voting or interest in and discussion of controversial public issues. Because students only have a cursory understanding of national government, they "…are being inadequately prepared to deal with international issues" (pp.23-24). Hahn offers concrete suggestions for classroom improvements that can help address the challenges she thinks civic educators face in a post 9/11 era.

Similarly, in Chapter Two, Kerr highlights the issue of students' lack of in-depth knowledge of democratic processes and practices, particularly with respect to elections and again, participation in political activities (p.34). One reason Kerr offers for the break between procedural understanding and action is that "It suggests that students have had limited opportunities to learn about , experience and understand these aspects of civic and political society, either in school or in the communities they live" (p.34). Kerr suggests that another cause for the disconnection between the understanding of democratic ideals and political action is the general mistrust or negative perceptions students have of government institutions. In this piece, Kerr provides a list of guiding questions he developed in response to the study results that he hopes will help educators identify early their agendas for developing citizenship education. In answering these questions, we may be able to encourage both a depth of understanding of political process and more student engagement in "effective" political action (p.36).

In Chapter Three, Kennedy and Mellor raise nuanced points about the IEP study itself and the nature of citizenship knowledge. First, they reiterate the

problem with large-scale assessments not being intricate enough analyses for shedding light on how a lack of knowledge may lead to lack of engagement. For like their American and English counterparts, the Australian teens lacked a specific understanding of very important concepts. Kennedy and Mellor also report that Australian teens "… do not see themselves being overly engaged in political activities" such as running for office, or writing editorial letters to newspapers (p.53). And that perhaps they cannot see themselves as effective citizens because they lack the understanding of the formal political system necessary to be confident enough to act (or even to think themselves as effective agents of political change). In relation to this point they offer the remedy that students need to gain an understanding of citizenship proper through participation (expression of their views in the classroom, for example) in order to learn better how to become engaged as citizens.

The second important point Kennedy and Mellor raise is related to the question: "...what should future citizens know and be able to do, and how can access to such knowledge be guaranteed?"(p.56)**.** They raise this question partly in response to the finding that early adolescent civic knowledge acquisition in Australia may not be acquired in the classroom. Rather their knowledge of democratic concepts may be television taught (there are no civics courses available to these teens). This could explain the absence in their thinking of a clear set of theoretical principles for the promotion of democracy. Knowing where students learn is a crucial one for considering what type of course is necessary for instilling some perception of political self-efficacy in students (whether civics courses should be designed to disseminate media, or designed toward some other type of knowledge). This second point, along with the proposal for providing access to stand-alone civics courses are especially significant points to draw from this article for anyone piloting citizenship curriculum initiatives.

In Chapter Four, Lee discusses the changing perceptions of democracy in Hong Kong from its colonial period to its democratization. With respect to the colonial period, he offers a fascinating account of the pragmatic political approach of Hong Kong and emphasizes a link between knowledge and participation analogous to the one made by Mellor and Kennedy:

> The fact that Hong Kong is a non-participant polity means that the traditionally politically apathetic Chinese failed to gain political education from political participation in a way that could reshape the influence of traditional political culture. Moreover in the context of a non-participant polity, the civic education curriculum emphasised the passive, obedient and law-abiding role of citizens' participation, as well as the cultivation of a sense of belonging and the encouragement of the participation of the younger generation (pp.64-65).

In the context of a depoliticized territory, and in the absence of civics courses, Hong Kong's epistemological orientation to democracy could still be said to be captured in the idea that "Political participation is a kind of education" (p.64), a sentiment toward democracy also conveyed as essential by those within

politicized societies. Although the American, English, and Australian study results prove similar in their emphases on participatory learning, the national divergences in content foci -- ranging between personal development to social obedience to theoretical principles such as rule of law or democratic rights -- can confuse a reader's interpretations of test results. When comparing Lee's results with other nations' results it *seems* as if non-politicized political orientation may be more pragmatic in approach, and democratized nations more theoretical.[1] Toward the end of the first section, then, the question that presents itself for answering is: how do we close the gap between valuing a community based on democratic principles and participation in that community?

Some of the results Lee presents are remarkable considering Hong Kong's history of political 'quiescence,' especially the students' ranking in the top five countries on the civics knowledge component of the test (p.71). Why they scored this way is a crucial consideration for any citizenship educator, and highlights the importance of studying international differences in the CivEd study scores. In part, Lee attributes this high level of knowledge of democracy to "…the frequent debates and active discussions on politics in the period or political transition toward the government handover…" (p.72).

Perhaps the return to civic engagement is ignited by political transition or turmoil. This thought reinforces the call from Hahn, Kerr and Kennedy and Mellor to gear citizenship education toward fighting political apathy or cynicism, perhaps with open classroom climates characterized by debate about school politics, and toward school reform. Or perhaps what Lee's perspective has implicitly shown us is that a proper knowledge base for a deeper understanding of democratic principles is knowledge of economics and international economy.

Part II: Interpretations of qualitative studies into citizenship curriculum and teaching

In the first part of his contribution to part II (Chapter Five), Sayer provides a brief background of European collaboration programs designed to reconstruct, develop or revive national and local communities (including educational communities) toward the shared goal of social and economic improvements across Europe. In principle, the shared interest of one of the main projects discussed (The Trans-European Mobility Programs for University Studies: TEMPUS) was that key democratic principles such as fairness, justice and freedom of expression were promoted across educational contexts. The TEMPUS participants aspired to put these principles "…*in action* at all points in and around the school system as an essential part of the learning curriculum: in the classroom and staffroom; across the school and teaching profession; in teacher-parent and school-community transactions" (emphasis mine, p.90).

One of the unfortunate outcomes of the well-intended projects Sayer discusses seems inherently ironic: that the modeling of active collaborative participation in improving communities and concerted efforts to promote democracy were interpreted uncharitably by the "Developing Services for

Democracy In Europe." Most generally, they were interpreted as instituting a political stance ineligible for charity funding (p.94). This misinterpretation brought into question the political nature of the term "democracy" in relation to the term "citizenship," highlighting one of Kerr's key challenges: the importance of coming to agreement (nationally and internationally) on the meaning of citizenship education in the context of democracy.

In light of the TEMPUS project controversy, and the subsequent refocusing and reducing of the project's democracy education to training "outputs," Sayer asks: Can citizenship be learned *about* by children, or is it to be practiced by schools? Once again, we are led back to the problem of promoting participation in schools rather than delivering citizenship education *to* students. This problem is significant because, ultimately, we are confined by the economic and structural top-down hierarchies that define the very essence of the school systems within which we work.

Sayer goes on to discuss many relevant and thought provoking questions for policy makers and educators that are derived from his experience in various training programs. He responds to these questions with much practical classroom advice (a relief from the flurry of acronyms in part one of his essay). He leaves us with a conclusion to consider in keeping with other authors in the volume: that there is an ongoing need for curricula that promotes schooling defined by responsible participation, one that creates space for students to learn how to 'live democratically.' As for knowledge acquisition toward this aim of teaching students how to live democratically, Sayer somewhat redirects us away from knowledge of theoretical principles to knowledge that relates directly to a student's 'home and society at large' (p.97). Such redirection raises the dilemma of reconciling federal agendas with local ones. In other words, we are left trying to reduce what appears to be an inevitable tension between the social assimilist and activist approaches to citizenship education.

Miller-Idriss (Chapter Six), is an ethnographer who for two years studied teacher and student perspectives on the issue of right winged extremism from three different vocational schools in Berlin; schools where there is a perception of right winged composition leaning toward "…male, blue-collar apprentices mostly from the east…therefore a group of young people deemed most at risk for recruitment into or participation in right-wing radical or extremist activities and groups "(p.102). She first discusses the implications of membership into or expression of what she calls "right wing radical" views for classroom teachers, with the intent to answer the question of how they are addressing the radical right and xenophobia in their classrooms.

She describes impediments to the study that reflect present and real challenges to educators everywhere who aspire to eliminate the racist and/or anti-foreigner views of their students. Such challenges include the inability of teachers to clearly identify who is part of the radical right amid all of the assumptions about them (as above); hard to identify because of the diversity of political views that the "radical right" political stance encompasses; and hard to identify because the symbols indicating active membership are ever-evolving

(for example, the number "88" replaced the swastika symbol, then once banned, became a "100-12" t-shirt).

The Miller-Idriss study is crucial especially in Berlin where there is an absence of curriculum content to help teachers understand how to pedagogically address radical right views and violence beyond class discussions about Nazi Germany and its consequences (p.106). Her conclusions are proactive responses to both student and teacher views on the lack of success in confronting students who promote racist and xenophobic messages. She asserts that helping teachers identify the radicals is key to a better anti-racist education, and that in part this identification involves learning to understand the symbols that are banned or not (p.107), as well as identifying which music, dress and organizational behaviours indicate extremist affiliations and active participation in illegal activities, and which indicate non-violent identification or sympathy with a radical political stance. Along with identification, she discusses the teachers' views on the importance of argumentation to:

> …develop effective responses to xenophobic, racist, or historically inaccurate statements made by students, such as 'foreigners are taking our jobs away'…Teachers explain that learning how to respond to these kinds of comments is an especially important aspect of classroom work because they can correct misinformation or misrepresentation put forward by right-wing students (p.108).

Some teachers (and eventually the author herself) argue strongly against limiting training to identification and argumentation as the primary strategies in effectively responding to the presence of the radical right in schools, saying that these are neither grounded in a pedagogical approach nor do they deal with the psychological aspects of radical right membership (p.109).

I think the conclusions offered by Miller-Idriss' are interesting because they raise the issue of whether or not rational argument works better to address students' racist and xenophobic views than pedagogical approaches that, for example, use hypothetical situations that make appeals to emotion or morality (if either works at all). Also, her interpretations of the views of students formally part of radical right organizations are most enlightening for administrators and educators who are concerned with the reality that students -- even those holding what appear to be non-radical views -- are not willing to express value-based opinions in their classrooms. Like Hahn, she concludes that it is necessary to make our students more aware of international issues, and that in order to do so, educators must develop classroom and extra curricular contexts designed to emphasize intercultural or social activity as the primary sources of student learning.

Miller-Idress' study confirms the need expressed consistently in part I of this volume: that spaces for teachers to take risks need be created and complemented by teacher training that helps them to address inflammatory topics and promote strategies and programs to "…bring youths together across conflicts, cultural and ethical divides" (p.117). The description of this study is clear and concise, and this chapter is strong not only for the depth and validity of

the study itself, but for the wide range of authentic classroom examples and considerations for teaching the results and interpretations evoke.

In the last Chapter of this volume, Wilde's various case studies of cross-curricular and extra-curricular political education complement and build upon Miller-Idriss' work, in emphasizing the importance of intercultural experience in developing citizenship education for German students (p.138). Her work qualitatively explores unofficial curriculum sites, ones with potential to remediate the inadequacies identified by previous research conducted on political education (Händle et. al, 1999a). Such inadequacies include internationally experienced curriculum restraints such as a focus on measured outcomes (accountability limitation); lack of experiential learning (the delivered curriculum limitation); a lack of national curriculum or priority given to citizenship education (lack of student interest in politics); and a lack of 'democratic and independent work' for students (pp.126-127).

Wilde uses case studies and interviews with self-motivated teachers and students in order to explore the value of extra curricular projects. Her interpretations lend solutions to several of the issues raised by the authors before her, especially the importance to civic education of live debate outside of classroom contexts and engagement with other cultures. But she highlights something missed by other interpretations of the IEA study results, a factor very important to many in the academic community interested in citizenship education. This is the importance, even necessity of, learning history in order to raise students' levels of political understanding, consciousness and empathetic engagement with others.

Wilde reminds readers of what many others in the volume said before her: that citizenship education seems negatively characterized or limited by both official and hidden centralized curricula (as well being restricted by home, parent, television, and peer group influences). And that while we are so limited, she suggests we seize unofficial or extra-curricular opportunities to educate for democracy. She presents information to the reader in a way that carves new paths for educators: one that responds to the dilemma of implementing official curriculum while still allowing students to create their own curriculum and school societies. Lastly, for teachers, she implicitly suggests exchange programs as one wave for future citizenship educators to ride.

The range of schooling sites and links between schools that Wilde advances with her case analyses is remarkable, certainly insightful into the various ways one can incorporate experiential knowledge and responsible participation into one's own classroom and community. Chapter seven, therefore, is an excellent closing Chapter for this book. It contains a good summary of the major issues with citizenship education today and presents some live possibilities of working within and outside the constraining, perhaps undemocratic, official curriculum. Possibilities certainly not limited to the German educational context.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Clearly, this volume is an essential read for anyone interested in civics or citizenship education and research. Together the authors present a wide range of perspectives on citizenship education policy, curriculum and teaching toward the promotion and preservation of democracy.

The one issue I would highlight is the range of different concepts of citizenship and civics education offered by the various authors, ones that do not imply a clear set of citizenship skills. One is left wondering if any valid international comparisons can be made. At the very least, the volume challenges the many authors themselves to "…com[e] to some agreement as to what citizenship education means" (Kerr, p.40). The editor of the volume could have included some introductory discussion of the commonalities in authors' definitions of citizenship education, and a better account of the purposes and nature of IEA study in the introduction.

I fervently agree that further research needs to be done in the following areas: the necessity of deeper exploration into the group differences in achievement in knowledge of government and in their attitudes toward public institutions (Hahn, 23); as above, coming to some agreement as to what democratic citizenship education means and clearly distinguishing -- or not at all distinguishing -- between civic and citizenship education; creating more curriculum space for stand-alone civics education and extra/cross-curricular activities where the acquisition of civic knowledge is 'purposeful' rather than spread across the social sciences (Kennedy and Mellor; Miller-Idriss; Wilde); and for better understanding citizenship education in terms of international issues (Hahn; Lee; Wilde). Which brings me to my second criticism: I think too many of the articles focus on national issues without enough international comparison.

Such international comparisons could have been dealt with in a concluding chapter from Wilde. I believe that many clear links between the authors' interpretations about the state of citizenship education has great potential to inform educators (from any country, especially Canada) who regularly deal with classrooms composed of diverse groups. Further, I think the concluding chapter necessary if only because of what I think is an obvious and incredible gap: the one between good civic education and an in-depth knowledge of national and global economy and individual economic rights. I will leave that consideration for the next volume on one of the most important issues of our time: finding ways to educate in order to preserve democracy in the face of market economy schooling and society.

Note 1:

Further, in relation to the depoliticized environment Lee emphasizes that for the citizens of Hong Kong, involvement in politics in the colonial period landed squarely in the realm of economics (p. 63). That is, in Hong Kong the overarching historical concern was financial stability and prosperity (low taxes, for example). Thus, there are some interesting connections that can be made here between having a history of a pragmatic approach to politics, the post-democratization of results from Hong Kong's IEA Phase 2

results, and what happens to established democracies when they are historically characterized by apathy and then face an imminent national crisis in political confidence and economy (as might be currently the case in the United States).

Jan Sobocan (jsobocan@uwo.ca) is currently a PhD candidate and Social Foundations Lecturer at The University of Western Ontario. Her research interests and *publications* are focussed on critical thinking (argumentation) and citizenship education, as well as assessment and evaluation